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EXAMINER

KRUSE, DAVID H

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1638

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9

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/542,618

Applicant(s)

WEHRMANN ET AL.

Examiner

David H Kruse

Art Unit

1638

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM
THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 October 2002.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 20 and 33 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 8-19, 21-32 and 34-41 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. This Office action is in response to the Amendment and Remarks filed 28 October 2002.
2. New claims 33-41 have been added as requested.
3. Those rejections not specifically addressed in this Office action are withdrawn in view of Applicant's amendments and Remarks.
4. The objections to claims 1-4, 5, 7 and 20 are withdrawn in view of Applicant's amendments and remarks regarding the deposit of biological materials.
5. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

6. Claims 9-11, 13-15, 17-19, 22-24, 26-28, 30, 31 and 32 remain rejected and claim 40 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. This rejection is repeated for the reason of record as set forth in the last Office action mailed 26 July 2002. Applicant's arguments filed 28 October 2002 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Claims 9, 13, 17, 22, 26 and 30 remain indefinite because the claims do not set forth any positive method steps leading to the maize plant at line 1 of the claims. Hence, it is unclear what the metes and bounds of the claimed methods are. Applicant argues that the techniques described in the present application clearly define and distinctly claim positive method steps for producing maize plants for small or large scale

Art Unit: 1638

production (page 12, 2nd paragraph of the Remarks). The Examiner responds that this argument equates the disclosure with what is claimed in the instant claims. The Applicant is reminded that limitations within the specification are not read into the claims, although limitations within the claims must be supported by the written description within the specification.

Claims 10, 14, 18, 23, 27 and 31 are indefinite for being dependent upon an indefinite claim. The limitations within said claims do not obviate the indefiniteness of the claim upon which they depend.

Claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32 remain indefinite because the phrases "excellent silage yield potential" "excellent grain yield potential" "excellent seedling vigor" and "excellent starch content of the whole plant", for example, are relative and do not state the metes and bounds of the claimed invention. Applicant argues that the terminology used is well known in the art and commonly used within breeding techniques for hybrid plants. Applicant also argues that the claim indicates that the traits must be originating from 39J26 (paragraph spanning pages 12-13 of the Remarks). The Examiner responds that the instant claims are not limited to hybrid plants. In addition, it remains the Examiner's opinion that the claim limitations are relative. It is clear from the art that the recited traits are not specific to hybrid maize plant 39J26, hence it is unclear what the metes and bounds of the claimed invention are.

Claims 16 and 29 are indefinite because a hybrid maize plant is not produced by a backcrossing technique. In the Examiner's opinion, the claim limitation "transferred by

Art Unit: 1638

backcrossing" is contrary to the meaning of the claim, hence the metes and bounds of the claim are unclear.

Claims 8 and 21 remain indefinite because the plant of claims 2 and 20, respectively, are not male sterile. Applicant's amendments to claims 8 and 21 are noted. However the claims remains indefinite because it is confusing to denote the fertile hybrid maize plant 39J26 as male sterile.

The cancellation of claims 8 and 21, and the submission of the following proposed new claims would obviate this rejection:

-- New claim 42. A method of producing a male sterile maize plant comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with a nucleic acid molecule that confers male sterility.

New claim 43. A male-sterile maize plant produced by the method of claim 42.

New claim 44. A method of producing a male sterile maize plant comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 20 with a nucleic acid molecule that confers male sterility. --

New claim 45. A male-sterile maize plant produced by the method of claim 44. --

At claim 40, the claim is directed to a 39J26 maize plant said plant being produced by a method wherein the exemplified 39J26 maize plant is crossed with a second plant. Clearly the plant at claim 40 cannot be the maize plant of claim 2 designated 39J26 or produced by the method of claim 38, to which the instant claim is directed and only have 50% of it's alleles from the 39J26 maize plant of claim 2. Hence, it is unclear what the metes and bounds of the claimed invention are.

Art Unit: 1638

7. Claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28, 32, 34, 39, 40 and 41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. At claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 29, 32, 39 and 40, the limitations “wherein said maize plant has derived at least 50% of its ancestral alleles from 39J26” and “deriving at least 50% of its ancestral alleles from 39J26” appear to be new matter, which is not permitted under 37 CFR § 1.53(b) and 35 USC § 132(a). The Examiner notes that Applicant points out at page 14, 4th paragraph, of the response filed 28 October 2002, where the amendment to claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 29, 32 and 39 and new claim 40 is supported in the instant specification. However, the Examiner does not find literal support for this limitation in the specification at the locations designated in Applicant’s response. Hence, it is unclear from the instant specification that Applicant had contemplated such a claim limitation at the time of Applicant’s invention.

At claims 34 and 41, the subject matter directed to producing double haploids of the described hybrid maize plant 39J26 appears to be new matter, which is not permitted under 37 CFR § 1.53(b) and 35 USC § 132(a). The Examiner notes that Applicant does not specifically point out in the response filed 28 October 2002, where claims 34 and 41 are supported in the instant specification. Hence, it is unclear from the instant specification that Applicant had contemplated such a claim at the time of Applicant’s invention.

Art Unit: 1638

8. Claims 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 24, 25, 28, 29 and 32 remain rejected and claims 8-10, 13, 14, 17, 18, 21-23, 26, 27, 30, 31 and 34-41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. This rejection is repeated for the reason of record as set forth in the last Office action mailed 26 July 2002 for claims 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 24, 25, 28, 29 and 32. Claims 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30 and 31 are now included in the rejection because these claims are broadly drawn to a method of using a multitude of non-exemplified, uncharacterized breeding partners in an unlimited number of crosses, given the open claim language and the failure to specify that an F1 hybrid is produced. Claims 8 and 21 are now included in the rejection because the specification does not describe a plant which is simultaneously male fertile and male sterile. Claims 34 and 35-41 are new claims and will be addressed below. Applicant's arguments filed 28 October 2002 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that they have identified the claimed plants by defining a particular threshold that limits variation and reciting a functional test to identify such plants (paragraph spanning pages 14-15 of the Remarks). Applicant argues that under the written description requirement, Applicant should be allowed to claim the progeny of a cross of maize plants crossed with 39J26 with phenotypic characteristics since they are distinguishing identifying characteristics (page 15, 1st paragraph of the Remarks). Applicant argues that one of ordinary skill in the art is reasonably appraised in knowing

that a plant crossed with 39J26 will result in a plant having half of the genetic contribution of 39J26 and must be capable of expressing a combination of at least two phenotypic characteristics of 39J26 (page 15, end of 1st paragraph of the Remarks). This argument is not found to be persuasive because the instant claims are directed to progeny of a hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 that is produced by crossing two inbred parental maize plants designated GE515243 with GE51344. Applicant does not describe any unique feature of said hybrid maize plant that would distinguish it s progeny from say the hybrid maize plant designated 38W36 (U.S. Patent 6,018,113). In addition, because the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 is a cross between two inbred parental maize plants, the actual genetic complement of each individual hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 could be slightly different from another hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 due to recombination of genetic material. This difference would be amplified in progeny of the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 due to crossing over at random loci and segregation. Hence, it is unclear that Applicant can adequately describe a progeny plant produced from the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 as claimed.

Applicant argues that a person having skill in the art could insert a DNA gene into a selected maize plant and that Applicants have defined transgenes in the present application (page 15, 2nd paragraph of the Remarks). This argument is not found to be fully persuasive because claims 12-15, 16-19 and 25-28 are directed to a transformed hybrid maize plant designated 39J26, and methods of using same, said transformed hybrid maize plant comprising any transgene. Given the breadth of the invention in the

instant claims it is unclear if Applicant was in possession of such a broad genus of transgenic hybrid maize plants at the time of the invention because Applicant does not clearly describe what effect all transgenes would have on the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26.

Applicant's argument that the plant of claim 12 is distinguishable from the prior art plants just as hybrid 39J26 without the transgenes is irrelevant to the instant rejection (page 16, 1st paragraph of the Remarks). The instant rejection is not directed to anticipation under 35 USC 102 or obviousness under 35 USC 103.

Applicant's argument concerning the test for definiteness on page 16, 2nd paragraph is irrelevant to the instant rejection.

Claims 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30 and 31 are now included in the rejection because these claims are broadly drawn to a method of using a multitude of non-exemplified, uncharacterized breeding partners in an unlimited number of crosses, given the open claim language and the failure to specify that an F1 hybrid is produced. Because Applicant has failed to adequately describe the starting materials in the methods of the instant claims, Applicant cannot adequately describe a method of using said starting materials.

Claims 8 and 21 are now included in the rejection because the specification does not describe a plant which is simultaneously male fertile and male sterile.

Claims 34 and 35-41 lack adequate written description because, at claims 34 and 41, Applicant does not describe a method of making a double haploid of the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26. At claims 35-41 Applicant does not adequately describe

Art Unit: 1638

successive filial generations of the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 as claimed in claims 36, 37, 39 and 40 and thus does not describe how to practice methods using such filial generations of the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 in claims 35 and 38. Hence, it is unclear from the instant specification that Applicant was in possession of the invention as broadly claimed.

9. Claims 13, 14, 17, 18, 26, 27, 30 and 31 remain rejected and claims 8-11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21-24, 25, 28, 29, 32 and 34-41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. This rejection is repeated for the reason of record as set forth in the last Office action mailed 26 July 2002 for claims 13, 14, 17, 18, 26, 27, 30 and 31. Claims 8-11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21-24, 25, 28, 29, 32, 34 and 35-41 are now included in the rejection because these claims are broadly drawn to non-exemplified progeny plants, methods of using a multitude of non-exemplified, uncharacterized breeding partners in an unlimited number of crosses, given the open claim language and the failure to specify that an F1 hybrid is produced. Claims 8 and 21 are now included in the rejection because the specification does not teach a plant which is simultaneously male fertile and male sterile. Claims 34 and 36-41 are new claims. Applicant's arguments filed 28 October 2002 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that the claims have now been amended to properly be drawn from a method thereby obviating this rejection and that Applicant has clearly described

and distinctly claimed the subject matter Applicants regard as the invention (page 16, 4th and 5th paragraph of the Remarks). This argument is not found to be persuasive for the reasons given supra for the lack of adequate written description and for the reasons given as follows.

Applicant has provided limited guidance for how to make and use the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26 in the instant specification. The nature of the art at the time of Applicant's invention was such that one of skill in the art could not reasonably predict what the product of a cross between two inbred parental plants would be without a reduction to practice. The art teaches that based on the number of segregating genes, the frequency of occurrence of any individual with a specific genotype is less than 1 in 10,000 and that even if the entire genotype of the parents has been characterized and the desired phenotype is known, only a few if any individuals having the desired genotype may be found in a large F_2 or S_0 population and that typically the genotype of neither the parents nor the desired genotype is known in detail (see Segebart, U.S. Patent 5,304,719, in particular the paragraph spanning columns 2-3). The art also teaches that the number of genes affecting the trait of primary economic importance in maize, grain yield, has been estimated to be in the range of 10-1000 and that inbred lines which are used as parents for breeding crosses differ in the number and combination of these genes (Segebart, U.S. Patent 5,367,109, column 2, lines 60-64). Segebart ('109) also teaches that one of the largest plant breeding programs in the world does not have a sufficiently large breeding population to be able to rely upon "playing the numbers" to obtain successful research results and that plant breeders use



Art Unit: 1638

their skills, experience and intuitive ability to select inbreds having the necessary qualities (column 4, 1st and 2nd paragraphs). Hence, given the fact that one of skill in the art cannot reasonably predict the number of genes that affect the trait of grain yield of the parental inbred lines of a hybrid maize plant, it is unclear how one of skill in the art could reasonably predict how to make and use the claimed maize plants and methods of making a maize plant using a second or filial non-exemplified maize plant produced from Applicant's exemplified hybrid maize plant. At claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32, the listed 39J26 traits, "excellent grain yield potential", "strong stalks" and "particularly suited...of the United States", for example, are regulated by multiple, non-exemplified genes and that Applicant has failed to teach one of skill in the art how to make the claimed maize plants, even such maize plants having at least 50% of its ancestral alleles from 39J26, because one of skill in the art could not predictably identify such a plant without undue trial and error experimentation. In addition, given the teachings of the prior art it is unclear from the instant specification that one of skill in the art could produce a 39J26 maize plant using the method of claim 38 to derive the 39J26 maize plant of claim 40 without undue trial and error experimentation.

The following amendments would obviate the rejections under 35 USC § 112, first paragraph:

Replace claims 8 and 21 with claims 42-45 as suggested to overcome the rejection under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph.

Cancel claims 9-19, 22-32 and 34-41.

Submit new claims 46-55 below (support for said claims can be found in the specification, pages 29-33).

-- New claim 46. A method of producing an herbicide resistant maize plant comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with a transgene that confers herbicide resistance.

New claim 47. An herbicide resistant maize plant produced by the method of claim 46.

New claim 48. A method of producing an insect resistant maize plant comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with a transgene that confers insect resistance.

New claim 49. An insect resistant maize plant produced by the method of claim 48.

New claim 50. A method of producing a disease resistant maize plant comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with a transgene that confers disease resistance.

New claim 51. A disease resistant maize plant produced by the method of claim 50.

New claim 52. A method of producing a maize plant with decreased phytate content comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with a transgene encoding phytase.

New claim 53. A maize plant with decreased phytate content, produced by the method of claim 52.

New claim 54. A method of producing a maize plant with modified fatty acid or carbohydrate metabolism comprising transforming the maize plant of claim 2 with one or more transgenes encoding a protein selected from the group consisting of stearyl-ACP desaturase, fructosyltransferase, levansucrase, alpha-amylase, invertase, and starch branching enzyme.

New claim 55. A maize plant produced by the method of claim 54. --

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

10. Claims 11, 15, 19, 24, 28 and 32 remain rejected and claims 39 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Weber (U.S. Patent 6,018,113, filed 29 October 1998). This rejection is repeated for the reason of record as set forth in the last Office action mailed 26 July 2002. Applicant's arguments filed 28 October 2002 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

The issue of the lack of adequate written description as directed to the instant claims is discussed supra.

Applicant argues that the claimed plant cannot be rendered obvious as it possesses a unique combination of traits, which confers a unique combination of genetics (page 17, 2nd paragraph of the Remarks). The Examiner maintains the instant rejection as it is directed to subsequent progeny plants of the hybrid maize plant designated 39J26. Because Applicant is only able to describe the exemplified 39J26 hybrid maize plant based to a limited number of phenotypic traits, the instant claims directed to subsequent progeny plants, even those that have derived at least 50% of

Art Unit: 1638

their ancestral alleles from 39J26, would have been indistinguishable from that of Weber. The Examiner notes that even though the claimed plant has 50% of its ancestral alleles from 39J26, the additionally claimed two 39J26 traits are controlled by multiple alleles, many of which would have been common to the 38W36 hybrid maize plant of Weber.

Applicant argues that the claims do not simply recite traits, but instead recites those specific traits only to the extent that they are "39J26" traits, thereby being derived from the seed/germplasm of 39J26. Applicant also argues that the claim also recites that the claimed plant must have 39J26 as an ancestor further indicating that these traits must originate from the 39J26 plant and not 38W36 (page 18, 2nd paragraph of the Remarks). This argument is not found to be persuasive because the 38W36 hybrid maize plant taught by Weber is capable of transferring at least two of the same traits as Applicant's 39J26 plant. In addition, because Applicant only describes the 39J26 hybrid maize plant based on phenotypic characteristics, these are the only characteristics one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention could use to compare progeny of Applicant's 39J26 hybrid maize plant with a progeny of Weber's 38W36 hybrid maize plant.

Applicant argues that there is no expectation of success that the crossing of the hybrid 38W36 with some yet to be identified plant would yield a plant with two traits enumerated in the claimed invention and at least 50% of its ancestral alleles from 39J26 because that particular plant did not begin with the claimed seed 39J26 which is essential (paragraph spanning pages 18-19 of the Remarks). This argument is not

Art Unit: 1638

found to be persuasive because of the reasons given in the previous paragraph. In addition, Applicant does not teach 50% of the alleles of the exemplified 39J26 hybrid maize plant by which one of ordinary skill in the art could distinguish progeny of Applicant's 39J26 hybrid maize plant with a progeny of Weber's 38W36 hybrid maize plant.

Applicant argues that similarities in phenotype between two varieties is not the same as saying that the two varieties have the same morphological and physiological characteristics as a whole, or that one is an obvious variant of the other. Applicant also argues that similarity in phenotype does not mean that the two varieties will perform similarly, particularly in a breeding program (paragraph spanning pages 19-20 of the Remarks). The Examiner responds that the Examiner does not consider the exemplified 39J26 hybrid maize plant of the instant invention to be anticipated or obvious in view of Weber's 38W36 hybrid maize plant. The Examiner has rejected progeny plants of Applicant's 39J26 hybrid maize plant as being indistinguishable from progeny plants of Weber's 38W36 hybrid maize plant based on phenotypic distinctions.

Applicant argues that Hybrid 38W36 does not exhibit the same characteristic as 39J26 (page 20, 2nd paragraph to page 21, 1st paragraph of the Remarks). This argument is not found to be persuasive, because the instant claims are directed to a maize plant expressing "at least two 39J26 traits", while the 38W36 hybrid maize plant inherently discloses such relative traits as "excellent grain yield potential", "particularly suited to the Central Maize Belt region of the United States" and "a relative maturity of approximately 109 based on the Comparative Relative Maturity Rating System for

Art Unit: 1638

harvest moisture of grain" and thus such traits are not unique identifying traits for hybrid maize 39J26. In addition, given the fact that the 38W36 hybrid maize plant of Weber is capable of transferring said relative traits, and that these same traits are also affected by the crossing partner, Applicant has failed to adequately distinguish the claimed maize plant from progeny of the 38W36 maize plant of the prior art.

Conclusion

11. This Office action is non-final.
12. Claims 1-7, 20 and 33 are allowed.
13. Claims 8-19, 21-32 and 34-41 are rejected.
14. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David H. Kruse, Ph.D. whose telephone number is (703) 306-4539. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Dr. Amy Nelson can be reached at (703) 306-3218. The fax telephone number for this Group is (703) 872-9306 Before Final or (703) 872-9307 After Final.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the Group Receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0196.

David H. Kruse, Ph.D.
30 December 2002

DAVID T. FOX
PRIMARY EXAMINER
GROUP ~~180~~ 1638

